

A Statement From the Columbia Families on NASA's Return To Flight

12 July 2005

The following is a statement from the families of the Space Shuttle Columbia mission STS-107:

"As NASA prepares to launch the Shuttle Discovery, we, the Columbia Families, would like to show our support for the STS-114 crew and all the dedication and talent of those who supported this Return to Flight effort. We have had two and one half years to reflect daily on the loss of our loved ones as the Shuttle Columbia (STS 107) broke apart over Texas on February 1, 2003."

"In the aftermath of the Columbia tragedy we saw our nation's space program reinvent itself. The extraordinary efforts of local, state and national organizations involved in the recovery effort, the Columbia Accident Investigation Board, the Return to Flight Task Group and all the NASA and aerospace industry workforce implementing the Return to Flight effort have clearly done an exemplary job in defining and reducing the technical risk as much as possible.

As the families of Apollo 1 and Challenger before us, we grieve deeply but know the exploration of space must go on. We hope we have learned, and will continue to learn, from each of these accidents, so that we will be as safe as we can be in this high risk endeavor.

"As important as solving the technical risk is, we must be vigilant to ensure the organizational and cultural issues that contributed to Apollo, Challenger, and Columbia are forever remembered. Under the leadership of the new NASA Administrator, we have every confidence that the sacrifice of our loved ones and those that preceded them will be realized for the benefit of all humankind.

"Godspeed Discovery."

Source: NASA

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